

IN THE CLAIMS

Claims 1-11 (Cancelled)

Claim 12. (Currently Amended) An ear tag for marking and identifying animals, the ear tag comprising:

a) a male tag component with a punch that, in use, perforates the animal's ear and penetrates into a hollow head of a female tag component under the action of an applicator tool having jaws,

b) the female tag component is provided with a sampling device, which has a sampling device for sampling biological material extracted from the ear of the animal when it is pierced by the punch, said sampling device extending laterally to the female tag component and is separable therefrom,

c) the sampling device further including an attachment ~~to, in use, fix~~ for fixing the sampling device to one of the jaws of the applicator tool whereupon, during use, opening of the jaws and/or its removal from the animal's ear separates the sampling device from the female tag component.

Claim 13. (Previously Presented) The ear tag according to claim 12, wherein the absorbent material is disposed transversely to the direction in which, in use, the male punch penetrates through the animal's ear and to the axis of the hollow head of the female tag component, the sampling material being posterior to the ear wall.

Claim 14. (Previously Presented) The ear tag according to claim 12 or 13 wherein the absorbent material is a sampling strip, one end of which is fixed to the attachment and the other is located transverse to the direction of penetration of the punch through the animal's ear.

Claim 15. (Previously Presented) The ear tag according to claim 14 wherein the absorbent material is connected by one of its ends transversely to the interior of the hollow head of the female tag panel and by its other end to said attachment.

Claim 16. (Previously Presented) The ear tag according to claim 14 wherein the attachment is fixed onto the periphery of the hollow head of the female tag component.

Claim 17. (Previously Presented) The ear tag according to claim 16 wherein the attachment and sampling device are slit over an opening of the hollow head of the female tag component.

Claim 18. (Previously Presented) The ear tag according to claim 15 wherein the attachment is fixed onto the periphery of the hollow head of the female tag component.

Claim 19. (Previously Presented) The ear tag according to claim 18 wherein the attachment and the sampling device are slit over an opening of the hollow head of the female tag component.

Claim 20. (Previously Presented) Ear tag according to claim 12 or 13 wherein the male tag component and the female tag component each include a panel, the panels and the attachment being each provided with identical symbols for marking and identification.